

Halloween: Trick or Treat?
by Reb Yeshayahu Heiliczer

"Howbeit then, when ye knew not G-d, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known G-d, or rather are known of G-d, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years" (Galatians 4:8-10).

Well, it's that time of year again! People rush to find that special orange pumpkin, search for the scariest costume, clothe the outside of the house in an eerie arrangement of glowing monsters, sticky spider webs, and a vast array of haunting, seasonal decor. All of this effort for the innocent fun of Halloween--perhaps? We certainly don't want to take away anyone's fun, but hundreds of years have totally changed the real truth behind the masked disguise of Halloween. Many people are not even aware of Halloween's historical origins, nor do they care. Whether or not you choose to participate in the celebration, you still might consider reading some historical highlights on how it all began--the story behind the celebration ----And yes, Halloween is a seasonal celebration connected to the movements of the heavens!---

Long ago, the festivals of the L-rd were changed into Church "holy days" (holidays). The changes began with Constantine (around the year A.D. 325), when Christianity and Paganism united. It was Constantine's efforts to appease the masses. A unification, of sorts, that united all people of various backgrounds and beliefs into one system that appeared to make everyone happy. The Christians were no longer persecuted but accepted, the Jews tolerated but ignored, and the Pagans? Well, they had their god(s), too, and so, in the name of peace, followed the blending of all types of beliefs, religions, philosophies, and cultures into one harmonious union that was intended for the good of all.

Festivals and Holy Days

One of the ways to achieve harmony among religions was to "correct" the festivals of the Lord by reinterpreting them into "acceptable" days for worship. One way of doing this was to revise the Jewish Calendar system by converting the Hebrew festivals. Now, this wasn't easy because the Hebrew calendar aligned most precisely with the movement of the heavens. This was G-d's calendar given to mankind, and this calendar aligned exactly with the Precession of the Equinox (PE). The best way to describe the PE is to look at the "hands" on a clock. The hands on a clock move from East to West, right to left, and this is the same way the PE move in the heavens. Interestingly, it is also the way to read Hebrew, from right to left.-- The reason? Because G-d ordained the heavens and time according to His time-line.

This new calendar consisted of a blending of the old with the new, and had four cardinal days (time-periods) set aside for "holy days." They were fall (Autumnal Equinox), winter

(Winter Solstice), spring (Vernal Equinox), and summer (Summer Solstice), and determined the four major festivals celebrated throughout the year.

The Autumn Equinox - day and night are equal in length It is a time for celebrating the harvest, endings, the dying of nature, and the dark night of the soul. The Autumnal Equinox also marked the beginning of the pagan year. This was the celebration that came to be known as Halloween.

The Winter Solstice - shorter days and longer nights It is the time period representing the Feast of Saturnalia (by the Romans) honoring the god/planet Saturn. The Feast of Saturnalia occurred from December 17 to the 24th. This was a time of debauchery, orgy, and drunkenness. On December 25th, the Romans celebrated the birthday of the "sun god." They believed that the sun died during the winter months and after the Winter Solstice, when the sun reclaimed the lengthening of the day, it was "born" anew.

The Vernal Equinox - day and night are equal in length It was a time to celebrate the joys of spring, new life, and the resurrection of nature over death. The Vernal Equinox is an ancient festival celebrating the death and rebirth of the gods Tammuz and Damuzi. This was time to celebrate the rites of fertility done through orgies and lasciviousness, and worship to the gods/goddesses of fertility in human/animal sacrifices. The use of colored eggs, "May Poles," rabbits, etc., were prominently used in festival worship.

The Summer Solstice - longer days and shorter nights The Britains called this a "Midsummer Night." It was a time of great abundance revealed in celebrations of drunken abandonment.

A Celebration of Death

From the earliest of times, as far back as B.C.E. 400, the ancient Celtic civilization gathered to celebrate the festival of the god of death, "Samhain," during the dark night of the soul, October 31st, where the souls of the wandering dead were thought to manifest themselves to the living This was a celebration of the Autumnal Equinox as a time of harvest, the culmination of Summer, and the dying of nature. It was a festival to bring FEAR over the minds of the unenlightened.

At the stroke of midnight, the Celts offered human sacrifices to the god of death. It was during this night, the soul passed from death to a new birth just as the clock sounded the midnight call ushering in a new day.-- A time of death to the old year and birth to the new, and so began the ancient Celtic New Year.

In A.D. 834, Pope Boniface IV moved the celebration of "All Saints Day" from May to the 1st of November. The day before became All Hallows' Evening, or Halloween. You may also remember that October 31st is Reformation Day in celebration of Martin Luther posting his Ninety-five Theses on the door of the church (this action, among others, essentially began the Reformation). All Saints Day was an attempt to rid the people of the festival of Samhain along with its sorcery and occult divination. All Saints Day was a

time to honor those martyred by Rome, but not recognized (by the Reformers) as a scriptural holy day.

Pope Boniface IV failed in his attempts to replace the festival of death with All Saints Day, because today Halloween is more popular than ever before. In fact, many people begin Halloween as "the holiday" season leading up to Christmas. This is evidenced on many neatly landscaped lawns in the form of a Santa Claus dressed as a witch or as black cats dressed in reindeer formation pulling a sleigh.

The name "Halloween" came to us by way of the British Isles. All Saints Day was known as "All Hallowed's" honoring Christian martyrs. The festival of Samhain always occurred the night before All Saints Day or, as it came to be known, All Hallowed's Eve (or All Hallowed's E'en). All Hallowed's Eve passed down to us today as the name of Halloween.

Pagan Practices Forbidden in the Tanach (Hebrew Scriptures)

"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire [human sacrifice to god(s); [Satan], or that useth divination [fortune-telling; calling upon the spirit world to know the future; one who interprets omens], or an observer of times [astrologer], or an enchanter [power gained from evil spirits to control the mind or will of another; one who casts spells, evil omens, or curses], or a witch [witchcraft], Or a charmer [one who uses sorcery or magic; one who manipulates the elements and unseen forces; a medium or spiritist], or a consulter with familiar spirits [one who seeks advice, wisdom, or council from evil spirits], or a wizard [male witch; warlock], or a necromancer [one who seeks council from the dead]. ...For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord..." (Deut. 18:10-11).

Halloween: The Dark Night of the Soul

The celebration of Halloween holds a far greater mystery, a much darker side, than what would normally appear on the surface. Who better to explain its ancient customs and practices other than with the literary assistance of one formerly "enticed by the craft?" --The name, by choice, will remain anonymous.....

The history of the ancient Druids is shaded in mystery and originates thousands of years ago from the practices of the Babylonians. Although later history traces much of the customs through the early Britains and Gauls, the ancient religious' practices remain somewhat of a mystery. The predominant forms of worship were derived from the elements of the seasons through the Solstice and Equinox, and the two predominant elements of nature, "fire" and "air."

Interestingly, when the first pilgrims arrived on the shores of America, pagan festivals were forbidden. --It wasn't customary to honor the Festival of the Dead nor the Feast of Saturnalia. The pilgrims followed a strict, unyielding adherence to their ancestral forms of worship, but they gave no opening to the ancient paganistic celebrations that were later introduced into Church society. It wasn't until the Middle Ages, when the ancient Druidic and Celtic customs saw a revival in America through the celebration of Halloween. The

Celtic immigrants from the British isles brought their folk customs and pagan superstitions with them, including Samhain the Festival of Death. This occurred simultaneously with a resurgence of witchcraft and Satanism in America.

Superstition helped to clothe the practice with astounding supernatural manifestations such as in the belief that on All Hallowed's Eve, witches flew through the sky on brooms with black cats poised delicately on the broom-tip as lookouts to guide them through the night.

Eventually, the church, weakened by complacency, no longer fought against the practice of witchcraft but more or less tolerated its existence. And as remains to this day, the time near the Autumnal Equinox was by far the most important night of the year.

Thousands of years have come and gone, yet Halloween still remains today as the official celebration of Summers' end and beginning of the Fall festivals. Halloween marks the seasonal worship of the Autumnal Equinox, the setting of the Pleiades, and an alternative for the Jewish New Year (Rosh HaShanah) and the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) during the month of Tishri.

Ancient civilizations' associated the seven stars of Pleiades (constellation of Taurus) with immortality of the soul and the star Alcyone representative of the sun-god, the center of the universe by which all things in the heaven revolved. The Pleiades held the future (through divination), death, endings (with the setting of the Pleiades celebrated in the fall; November/December), new birth and beginnings (the rising of the Pleiades celebrated in the spring; March/June). A good example of the rising and setting of the Pleiades can be found directly in Scripture in Amos (5:8): "Seek him [seek the Creator - not the creation] that maketh the seven stars [the Pleiades] and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death [setting] into the morning [rising], and maketh the day dark with night...."

The future fortune of the village, through good or bad omens, came through the rising and setting of the stars of the Pleiades and the gods of the night. During the dark night of the soul, a great festival occurred near the Autumnal Equinox, an eerie counterpart to the modern-day Harvest Festival, where huge "bone fires" surrounded the villages illuminating the night sky with a bright, reddish orange glow--the familiar colors of the harvest. Bone fires originated far earlier than the celebration of Samhain, but were carried over into the Halloween night of festivities later by the Druids and Celts. The element of "fire" acted as the altar of sacrifice and the blood of the sacrificial victims (both human and animal) fueled the inferno (similar to the High Priest sprinkling blood on the Ark of the Covenant during the Day of Atonement). The bone fires' two-fold purpose was to both appease and drive away the bad spirits that wandered the earth during the dark night of the soul.

The sacrificial victims were led through the streets of the village by the priests who ceremonially offered them to the Lord of Death, Satan. From the death agonies of the "living" victim placed on the altar of sacrifice, the priests divined the future of the village from the way the soul departed the body. This custom originated in Babylon where the

Babylonian priests' prayed to the symbolic deities (Nimrod) to inquire (divine) the will of the gods:

"O Great ones, gods of the night...O Pleiades...." (1) The victims were furiously consumed by the roaring flames, and in the morning, all that was left were the bones and ashes. Today without realizing it, people everywhere practice a similar ritual (hopefully, nix the sacrifice) during the Harvest Festival, not as "bone fires," but as "bon fires."

Another custom was the marking of the body with strange, ritualistic markings especially carved near the stomach area (if female). It was the ancient Druidic "TAU" symbol of fertility, death, reincarnation, and written with the letter "T" or the "tau cross," an ancient symbol for Tammuz, the dying and rising divinity associated with fertility cults. This same shape can be found in the Hermetic use of the "ouroboros" representative of the "tree of life." The primeval representation of the renewal of life processes within its own substance; i.e., the rebirth from its own ashes--both living forever--thus representing eternity. It also depends on the direction of the "T-cross" (i.e., towards the head or towards the feet). In fertility cults, this symbol would appear over the womb area or near the heart. Today, some might wear it in the form of a cross on a chain which hangs near the heart. -- Usually, the shape would be over the womb area (crux ansata - a symbol of life), and not as a perfect circle. Sometimes a point, or a comma, is used to form the shape of the "T" representative of the tongue of fire, placed for the symbol representing a spirit-being or messenger, to signify his (the spirit's) more than human character. In alchemy the practical solution for the use of the ouroboros was a representation of the "dissolution of the body by fermentation; ie, death" (Berthelott).

Initially, the ancient priests carried a hollowed turnip with a lighted candle made with the fat of an animal or human. The symbol of the hollowed turnip carried the "Jock (or Jack) of the Lantern" whose likeness (image) was carved into the outer core of the turnip. The Jock (or Jack) was the guiding spirit of the lantern who dwelled in the light of the burning fat. Wearing a symbolic mask and dressed in a black, hooded robe and skins of sacrificed animals (sometimes a human body-part was also used as a token), the priests carried the Jock spirit on a dangling rope before them to guide the soul of its carrier through the darkness of night (replicated from a similar procession occurring during the Jewish festival of lights). This procession was of special significance when lighted on the eve of October 31st, to celebrate the ending of the seasons through the setting of the Pleiades. The Jock O'Lantern provided the light, the spirit-guide for the souls of the walking undead. Later, in America, pumpkins replaced turnips because they were harvested during the Fall, readily available, and easier to carve than turnips.

During the dark night of the soul, the hooded priests walked through the streets passing from house to house with a special demand of food, drink, or an added bonus, the virgin sons and daughters of the villagers to offer as sacrifice to the spirits of the night.

Sometimes the villagers would also dress in costume to hide (mask) their identity from the evil spirits especially in efforts to protect their children. In this way, the evil spirits were fooled into thinking the villagers to be evil spirits also and not harm them. The

villagers created special amulets for good luck. The sweet taste of the "apple" became the favorite because it pleased the evil spirits and brought good luck to the villagers (bobbing of apples evolved from this belief). The ancient Druids' believed that witches, demons, and spirits of the dead roamed the earth on the eve of November 1st. If the village willingly complied with their demands, the priests passed by, but if the village failed to produce something of value, the priests placed the "Jock O'Lantern" outside the door post of the house to be released as a curse upon the dwellers. If this be the case, the village is cursed and the spirits left to wander the streets to ravage homes and bring destruction upon its residence. This custom has been passed down to us in the form of "Trick or Treat."